

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2004

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Bloomfield, Chatterjee, Kreider, Senhauser, and Spraul-Schmidt present. Absent: Kirk, Raser, Sullebarger and Wallace

MINUTES

The minutes of the Monday, July 26, 2004 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted (Motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 621 MAIN STREET, MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented the staff report regarding an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Fort Washington Hotel located at 621 Main St between Sixth and Seventh Streets at the corner of Gano Street. The six-story hotel recently had been operated as a rooming house with two commercial spaces on the first floor.

Ms. Kellam stated the project involves converting the second through sixth floor to ten residential condominiums. The first floor will have parking garages for ten cars, and an exercise room; one commercial space will be retained. The front elevation will be restored and an existing Fort Washington Hotel sign will be removed. The Fort Washington painted signs on the side and rear of the building will remain. Ms. Kellam indicated that the central arched windows on the front façade will remain, but that the curved transom lights in the oriel windows on that façade will be replaced with flat glass units.

Ms. Kellam said the alterations to the side and rear elevations are extensive, particularly new garage door cuts on the first floor and the alterations to window openings throughout the façade. Staff recognizes that the new garages and balconies are necessary to make the property more marketable, but is concerned that the extent of the new work may not meet the letter of the guidelines for the Main Street Historic District.

Ms. Kellam recommended that the number of window alterations could be reduced if each balcony was served by one rather than two new doors. Project architect Chantelle Noble of Brashear Bolton Architects explained that the pairs of doors would provide needed light and visually expand the interior space. In answer to Mr. Kreider, Ms. Noble confirmed that the north façade faces a narrow alley and that its view is shielded by neighboring buildings.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee), to take the following actions:

1. Find that the alteration of several window openings is necessary to facilitate the marketing of the property and the preservation of the building.

2. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the adaptive reuse of the building at 621 Main Street with the condition that any revisions and final plans be reviewed and approved by the Urban Conservator prior to issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness and a building permit.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, AND ZONING VARIANCES, 1895
AND 1899 MADISON ROAD, EAST WALNUT HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report regarding the properties at 1895 and 1899 Madison Road located in the East Walnut Hills Historic District. On February 9, 2004, the Board approved construction of a single-family residence at 1899 Madison Rd. At that time the Board encouraged the owner, Robert Chavez, to consider replacing or removing the existing chain-link fence and overgrown hedgerow along the Madison Road and Baker Place frontages of 1899 Madison Road. Robert Sala, project architect, is now requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness and the necessary Zoning Variances on behalf of Mr. Chavez to install a new wall and fence at 1895 and 1899 Madison Road.

The applicant now proposes to install a stuccoed masonry wall across the north property line of 1895 and 1899 Madison Road and a portion of the Baker Place. The remainder of the Baker Place frontage would have an iron fence with stuccoed piers. Ms. Cowden indicated that the wall requires a Zoning Variance for its height and opacity while the fence requires a Zoning Variance for its height. Staff stated the landscape plan had also been revised to include additional plantings and a new driveway.

Ms. Cowden said that the Board had approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new single-family residence in 1997 that included a wall along Madison Road and Baker Place to shield a garage, motor court and play yard. Ms. Cowden indicated that the project approved in 1997 represents a different scheme. For this reason, the current proposal should be considered as a separate application and evaluated under the City of Cincinnati's Zoning Code adopted earlier this year and the East Walnut Hills Historic District Conservation Guidelines accordingly.

Ms. Cowden stated that several property owners had contacted staff and expressed strong objections to the proposal. She circulated correspondence received since the staff report was written. This included a copy of an August 9, 2004 email from the East Walnut Hills Assembly stating that the proposal did not comply with the historic district guidelines and that the project was met with great resistance by area residents. Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that it has recently denied applications for similar work, most recently for a 4'-0" iron fence at 1955 Madison Road.

Robert Sala, project architect, landscape architect Gary Meisner and Mr. Chavez were present to answer questions. Mr. Sala stated that the new residence sits below the grade of Madison Road and is therefore subject to heightened sound levels from traffic. Citing increasing traffic speeds on Madison Road and recent accidents, Mr. Sala indicated the wall would also served as a safety measure.

Mr. Meisner indicated that the primary reasons for the wall were to dampen traffic and street noise and to create privacy for his client. In response to a question from Mr. Kreider, Mr. Meisner stated a sound study had not been conducted to determine the exact impact of the proposed wall on adjacent properties. Mr. Meisner asserted that unlike

concrete, the uneven surface would absorb some sound. He also stated the proposed wall would be covered with deciduous vines, which would serve to soften the wall visually and dampen sound.

Sally Wilson, owner and resident of 1901 Madison Road, spoke in opposition to the wall stating it would set a harmful precedent for the district. She also voiced objections to the proposed combined driveway that would serve residences at 1899 Madison Road and 2777 Baker Place as well as any future residence built at 1895 Madison Road.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to take the following actions:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the additional landscaping and shared driveway, as shown in the attached plans, finding that this work meets the East Walnut Hills Historic District Conservation Guidelines.
2. Deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed wall, gates, and iron fencing, as shown in the attached plans, finding that the work does not meet the East Walnut Hills Historic District Conservation Guidelines.
3. Deny the requested Zoning Variances for the height and opacity of the proposed wall and the height of the proposed iron fence and piers, finding that such relief from the literal interpretation of the Cincinnati Zoning Code:
 - a. Will result in an enclosure that is not characteristic of properties within the East Walnut Hills Historic District.
 - b. Is not necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation.
 - c. Is not necessary to provide the owner a recoverable rate of return on the real property.
4. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for a 3'-0" high iron fence with perimeter planting along Madison Road and Baker Place.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCES, 1618 SYCAMORE STREET, PROSPECT HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report for a Certificate of Appropriateness and zoning variances to build a rear addition and rooftop deck at 1618 Sycamore Street. Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that this project had been before it in June 2003 and had been tabled to give the owner time to review the proposal with Buildings and Inspection and to revise the design to meet building code requirements and the guidelines of the district.

The proposal has notable revisions and now includes a two-car garage on the first story in the rear, additional living space on the second story, a rooftop deck and a narrow stair tower leading to the deck. Ms. Cowden said that staff believes the rear addition, the rooftop deck and pergola now meet the Prospect Hill Historic District Guidelines. Staff still had reservations about the north wall of the garage and recommended it have windows on the first floor.

Ms. Cowden said that 1618 Sycamore is located in a RM-07 Zone and the addition does not meet the required rear and side yard setback. A zoning variance will also be required for the stair tower which exceeds the height of the original building.

Architect Madeleine Taylor and Tre Sheldon the owner's son were present to reply to questions from the Board. In response to Mr. Kreider, Ms. Taylor explained that the first floor of the garage was windowless to provide needed security. She presented an elevation drawing showing that the view of that wall was largely obscured by a property line retaining wall. Mr. Sheldon indicated that an existing wrought iron gate might be relocated in the alley to provide additional security.

In reply to Mr. Senhauser Ms. Taylor stated that the 28' deep garage has been designed to facilitate wheelchair access to a large automobile and to provide a sufficient footprint for the new master bedroom above.

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Kreider) to take the following actions:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal, as shown in the attached plans, finding that the addition, stair tower, rooftop deck and pergola meet the Prospect Hill Historic District Conservation Guidelines, with the following conditions:
 - a. Final selection of windows, roofing and other materials as well as any revisions to the plans shall be submitted to the Urban Conservator for approval prior to construction.
2. Grant approval of Zoning Variances for the required side and rear yard setbacks and the maximum height to construct the addition and stair tower, finding that such relief:
 - a. Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to property in the district or vicinity where the property is located, and
 - b. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCES, 111
MULBERRY STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented the staff report on a property at 111 Mulberry Street in the Over-The-Rhine Historic District. The applicant represents a potential buyer for the property who would like to rehabilitate as an owner-occupied two family. New work will include constructing two cut-away roof decks, a first floor deck and a roof addition. The purchase of the property depends on the Board's approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness and required zoning variances.

The property is located in a RM-07 Residential Mixed Zoning District and in a Hillside Zoning overlay district. The proposed work requires zoning variances for height and setbacks. Ms. Kellam stated that the project as proposed involves extensive modifications to window openings in the south wall, removal of a portion of the top of that wall and the construction of a prominent rooftop addition. Ms. Kellam said staff had met with the applicant to discuss revisions that could make the project better meet the district guidelines, but the applicant chose to submit the plans as originally proposed. Staff was not recommending approval without modification.

Mr. Senhauser suggested to the buyer/applicant Kevin Feldman that the Board consider the design as a preliminary review rather than vote on the proposal at this meeting. He explained that the Board could give its reactions/suggestions; his designer could make any necessary changes and return for formal review at the next meeting. Mr. Feldman agreed to proceed with the preliminary review.

Project designer Tyler Brown addressed the Board's concerns regarding the changes proposed for the rear wall. He indicated that his client required the window modifications on all levels in order to maximize the views and provide additional lighting. Mr. Bloomfield said the desired affect could be achieved with fewer modifications; he suggested a single door per floor. Mr. Senhauser observed that the existing windows were already quite tall and that French doors with balconies would not offer a significant advantage. Mr. Kreider stated he could better accept the proposed window treatment on the lower levels than on the more visible upper floors.

Mr. Senhauser stated that he was less concerned about the removal of the upper half of the fourth floor to accommodate a deck, but the Board would consider the total affect on that wall. Mr. Kreider indicated he could accept the street side cut-away deck, but was more concerned about the visibility of the deck atop the new roof addition. He suggested moving the deck rearward to be out of sight lines for Mulberry Street. Mr. Senhauser indicated he thought an acceptable compromise was possible.

The Board agreed that the rear first floor deck was acceptable as proposed and that a zoning variance to allow its construction was warranted.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Kreider) to grant approval of a Zoning Variance for the required side and rear yard setbacks to permit the construction of a rear deck on the first floor of 111 Mulberry Street, finding that such relief:

- a. Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to property in the district or vicinity where the property is located, and
- b. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district.

Because review of the modifications of the remainder of the design was treated as a preliminary design review, no further action was required of the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser, Chairman

Date: _____